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THE LOOM OF YEARS

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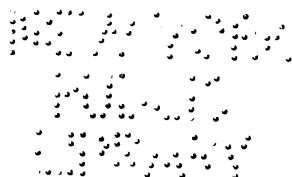
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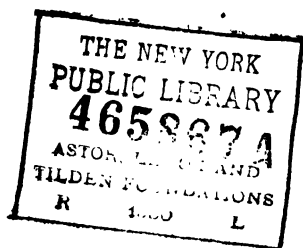
BY
ALFRED NOYES

"I broider the world upon a loom,
I broider with dreams my tapestry;
Here in a little lonely room
I am master of earth and sea,
And the planets come to me."

London
Grant Richards

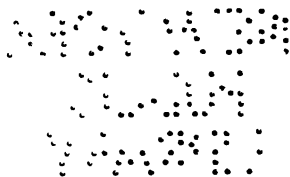
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Alfred Noyes.



DEDICATION

AMONG THE LIVING
TO A VIOLINIST
WHO ONCE WROTE A LINE OF POETRY
AND
AMONG THE DEAD
TO JAMES PAYN
WHOSE KINDNESS I CANNOT REPAY

Maggie Brock 20 Jan 1950

The *Symbolist* was first published in *Literature*. The other pieces are now published for the first time.

Contents

	PAGE
SEA FOAM	9
THE SONG OF RE-BIRTH	12
AMOUR DU CRÉPUSCULE	16
OLD JAPAN	18
HAUNTED IN OLD JAPAN	24
THE SYMBOLIST	28
LOVE-SONG OF MOINA	30
THE MYSTERIOUS CHAMBER	33
THE LOTUS OF WISDOM	41
CHRIST CRUCIFIED	43
IN THE HEART OF THE WOODS	45
SONG OF HANRAHAN THE RED	48
PASTICHE	51

CONTENTS

	PAGE
A BALLAD OF THE WIND AND THE RAIN . . .	54
AN AESTHETE	58
ART	61
TRIOLET	70
ECHO AND NARCISSUS	71
THE MYSTIC	76
MICHAEL OAKTREE	81
THE STATUE	96

SEA FOAM

TAKE my song and let it be
Frail as foam upon the sea :
Dumb with sorrow let it die,
It is not more frail than I.

I have seen it in my dreams
Floating over sapphire streams,
Like a dying swan that loud
Poureth light on cliff and cloud :

I have seen it soaring high
Scattering music o'er the sky :

THE LOOM OF YEARS

But I woke with face aglow
And I found it lying low,

In a stony barren place,
Asking comfort, with its face
Pressed against the bitter dearth
Of our mournful mother, Earth.

When in dreams it sang again
Songs of sun and wind and rain,
Oft it looked on me and smiled,
Flying o'er the waters wild.

In the dark and noisy town
Let it weary, sink and drown :
If it can recall to thee
Half the joy it gave to me,
Half the gladness born of pain
I shall not have sung in vain.

SEA FOAM

Take my song and let it be
As the foam upon the sea ;
Let it live and love and die,
It is not more frail than I.

THE SONG OF RE-BIRTH

In the light of the silent stars that shine on the
struggling sea,

In the weary cry of the wind and the whisper of
flower and tree,

Under the breath of laughter, deep in the tide of
tears,

I hear the Loom of the Weaver that weaves the
Web of Years.

The leaves of the winter wither and sink in the
forest mould

To colour the flowers of April with purple and
white and gold,

THE SONG OF RE-BIRTH

Light and scent and music die and are born again
In the sigh of a weary woman that wakes in a
world of pain.

The hound, the fawn and the hawk, and the doves
that croon and coo,
Well we know for our kindred with all beneath
the blue,
The black wave and the flowing wind that hold
our hopes and fears
As we come from the Loom of the Weaver that
weaves the Web of Years.

The green uncrumpling fern and the dew that dims
the rose
Are mingled into the Silence where the wings of
music close,

THE LOOM OF YEARS

Mingled into the Timeless that never a moment
mars,

Mingled into the Darkness that made the suns and
stars.

Soul to soul in the Darkness, dust to dust in the
light

The wefts outworn of the ages are gathered again
from the night,

Losing never a thread of their scattered hopes and
fears

As they come from the Loom of the Weaver that
weaves the Web of Years.

Oh, woven in one wide Loom through the throbbing
weft of the whole,

One in spirit and flesh, one in body and soul,

THE SONG OF RE-BIRTH

Though the wave is alone in its whisper, the wind
in its weary sigh,

The heart of man in the silence, the night in its
human cry,

One with the flower of a day, one with the
withered moon,

One with the granite mountains that melt into the
noon,

One with the dream that triumphs beyond the
light of the spheres,

We come from the Loom of the Weaver that
weaves the Web of Years.

AMOUR DU CRÉPUSCULE

("To a tune of Blake's")

SWEET Sleep, linger nigh ;
Let the smile be half a sigh,
Wistful as the parting day,
Tired of striving to be gay.

Sweet Night, with dim hair
Brush the sunny breast half bare,
Where the rosebud softly glows
Through the gloaming of repose.

Sweet Love, with deep wings
Clothe me close in shadowings,

AMOUR DU CRÉPUSCULE

While my softly breathing lips
Touch her softly breathing lips.

Dreams, dreams, dim her eyes,
Let her wake in sweet surprise,
Wondering what sad singing bird
In the twilight softly stirred.

What sweet moment floated nigh,
Flower or wild-winged butterfly,
Honey-laden like a bee,
Murmuring of infinity.

OLD JAPAN

IN old Japan, by creek and bay,
The blue plum-blossoms blow,
Where birds with sea-blue plumage gay
Through sea-blue branches go ;
Dragons are coiling down below
Like dragons on a fan ;
And pig-tailed sailors lurching slow
Through streets of old Japan.

There, in the dim blue death of day,
Where white tea-roses grow,
Petals and scents are strewn astray
Till night be sweet enow ;

OLD JAPAN

Then lovers wander whispering low,
As lovers only can,
Where rosy paper lanterns glow,
Through streets of old Japan.

From Wonderland to Yea-Or-Nay
The junks with painted prow
Dream on the purple water-way,
Nor ever meet a foe ;
Though still, with stiff mustachio
And crooked ataghan,
Their pirates guard with pomp and show
The ships of old Japan.

How far beyond the dawning day
The glories ebb and flow,
Where still the wonder-children play,
The witches mop and mow ;

THE LOOM OF YEARS

How far, how far, no chart may show,
To heart of mortal man,
The light, the splendour, and the glow
That once were old Japan !

That land is very far away,
We lost it long ago ;
In old Japan the grass is grey,
The trees are white with snow ;
The sea-blue bird became a crow,
The lizards leapt and ran,
No dragons mourned that overthrow,
The dream of old Japan.

In old Japan, at windows grey,
Where scents of opium flow,
Strange smiling faces, white as clay,
Nod idly to and fro ;

OLD JAPAN

There life and death may come and go,
With blessing or with ban,
And still no better gift bestow
Than this, in old Japan.

And now the wistful years delay
To wonder why and how
The blue fantastic twisted day,
When Emperor Hwang or Chow
Dreamed in the colour and the glow
That light the heart of man,
Could e'er such hours of flowers bestrow
Through streets of old Japan.

In old Japan they used to play
A game forgotten now ;
They filled a nacre-coloured tray
With perfumes in a row,

THE LOOM OF YEARS

Breathing of all the flowers that blow
Where dark-blue rivers ran,
Like those upon the plates, you know,
Through fields of old Japan ;

Then with a silver spatula
The mandarins would go . .
To test the scented dust and say,
With many a *hum* and *ho* . .
What flower of all the flowers that grow
For joy of maid or man
Conceived the scents that puzzled so
The brains of old Japan.

In old Japan, where poets pray
With white uplifted brow,
What mystic floating scents delay
Below the purple bough,

OLD JAPAN

O'er plains no scythe of death may mow,
Nor power of reason scan?
What mandarin musicians know
The flower of old Japan?

*There, in the dim blue death of day,
Where white tea-roses grow,
Petals and scents are strewn astray
Till night be sweet enow;
Then lovers wander, whispering low,
As lovers only can,
Where rosy paper lanterns glow,
Through streets of old Japan*

HAUNTED IN OLD JAPAN

I

MUSIC of the star-shine shifting o'er the sea,
Mirror me no longer in the dusk of memory ;
Dim and white the rose-leaves drift along the
shore,
Wind among the roses, blow no more !

II

*All along the purple creek lit with silver foam,
Silent, silent voices, cry no more of home ;
Soft beyond the cherry trees o'er the dim lagoon
Dawns the crimson lantern of the large, low moon.*

HAUNTED IN OLD JAPAN

III

We that loved in April, we that turned away
Laughing, ere the wood-dove crooned across the May,
Watch the withered rose-leaves drift along the shore,
Wind among the roses, blow no more.

IV

We that saw the winter waste the weeping bower,
We that saw the young love perish like a flower,
We that saw the dark eyes deepening with tears,
Hear the vanished voices in the land beyond the
years.

V

We that hurt the thing we loved; we that went
astray,
We that in the darkness idly dreamed of day . . .
. . . Ah! The dreary rose-leaves drift along the
shore,
Wind among the roses, blow no more!

THE LOOM OF YEARS

VI

Lonely starry faces, wonderful and white,
Yearning with a cry across the dim sweet night,
All our dreams are blown adrift as flowers before
 a fan,
All our hearts are haunted in the heart of old
 Japan.

VII

Haunted, haunted, haunted; we that mocked and
 sinned
Hear the vanished voices wailing down the wind,
Watch the ruined rose-leaves drift along the shore;
 Wind among the roses, blow no more!

VIII

We, the sons of reason, we that chose to bride
Knowledge and rejected the Dream that we denied,

HAUNTED IN OLD JAPAN

We that mocked the Holy Ghost and chose the
Son of Man,¹

Now must wander haunted in the heart of old Japan.

IX

Haunted, haunted, haunted, by the sound of fall-
ing tears,

Haunted, haunted, haunted, by the yearning of the
years ;

Ah ! the phantom rose-leaves drift along the shore ;

Wind among the roses, blow no more !

X

All along the purple creek, lit with silver foam,

Sobbing, sobbing voices, cry no more of home :

Soft beyond the cherry trees o'er the dim lagoon

Dawns the crimson lantern of the large, low moon.

¹ V. William Blake on Voltaire.

THE SYMBOLIST

HELP me to seek that unknown land,
Help me to see the shrine,
Help me to feel the hidden hand
That ever holdeth mine.

Help me to seek, and I shall see ;
To hear, and I shall know ;
To feel, and I shall hold in fee
The realms of earth below.

Help me to mourn, and I shall love ;
What grief is like to mine ?
Crown me with thorn, the stars above
Shall in the circlet shine !

THE SYMBOLIST

The mystic angels group and kneel
 Around the cross of flame,
Crying, as through the gloom they steal,
 The glory of the Name.

The Temple opens wide : none sees
 The love, the dream, the light ;
Oh blind and finite, are not these
 Blinding and infinite ?

The veil, the veil is rent : the skies
 Are white with wings of fire,
Where victim souls triumphant rise
 In torment of desire.

Help me to seek : I would not find,
 For when I find I know
I shall have clasped the hollow wind
 And built a house of snow.

LOVE-SONG OF MOINA

I HAVE heard the cry of little waves in lonely
places,

I have heard the whisper of winds in forests drear,
In valleys haunted with an ancient fear,

Dim with old tears and faint with desolate faces

That wander crying through the fruitless year ;

Crying alone, they are : in the bitter darkness,
alone ;

Eily arone, arone ; eily arone, arone.

I have seen the red eagle snatch the lambkin to
the mountains,

Fiercely he tore the little heart on the black crags
afar,

LOVE-SONG OF MOINA

While the sad waves moaned, moaned upon the
bar

And the green mackerel leaped in rainbow-coloured
fountains

Under the last light of the sunset star ;

And in the shimmering shallows they leaped till
day was done,

Eily arone, arone ; eily arone, arone.

I saw the red eagle falling from the clouds of
heaven,

A feathered shaft quivered in his kingly breast,

Clenched were his craggy claws in iron rest,

Scorn was in his golden eyes, though his great
heart was riven.

He begged no pity of the sun that darkened in
the west,

THE LOOM OF YEARS

Far off, he saw his mate upon the mountain crag
alone,

Eily arone, arone ! eily arone, arone.

Fallen was the light of the rainbow-coloured foun-
tains,

When at ebb the stiffening shoals were left upon
the weedy shore ;

Dead, like happy days they were ; they shall return
no more ;

Oh Clessamor, King, Red Eagle of the green sea-
mountains,

This day of all the days of love shall come no
more, no more,

Till crying alone we are, crying, crying alone ;

Eily arone, arone ; eily arone, arone.

THE MYSTERIOUS CHAMBER

(After the prose of Baudelaire)

THE strange ethereal chamber, dim and rich,
Dim as a dream, rich as a reverie,
I knew it all of old, surely I knew
The floating twilight tinged with rose and blue,
The moon-soft carven niche
Whence the cold marble, wan as memory,
Slopes to the wine-sweet bath of cold dark fire,
Perfumed with old regret and dead desire.

There the soul slumbers in the purple waves
Of indolence and dreams of the old dead years,

THE LOOM OF YEARS

Dreams of the wild sweet flower of red young lips,
Meeting and murmuring in the dark eclipse

Of joy, where pain still craves

One tear of love to mingle with their tears,
One passionate welcome ere the wild farewell,
One flash of Heaven across the fires of Hell.

But here the very walls are woven of dreams

All undefined by blasphemies of art ;

Here pure from finite hues the very night
Conceives the mystic harmonies of light,

Delicious glooms and gleams ;

And sorrow falls in rose-leaves on the heart,
And pain that yearns upon the passing hour
Is but a perfume haunting a dead flower.

The dimmest scent of the most dimmest bloom
Of faint blue lilac where the starlights swim

THE MYSTERIOUS CHAMBER

Wreathed with the floating incense of the breath
Of thrilling dews that sweetly swoon to death
 Dreams through the rich hushed room ;
The light is holier than a Vesper hymn ;
Outside I know the hot days are begun,
But here the scented curtains hide the sun.

Dark on the couch, warm in the scented dale
That in her sleep she softly hollowed out
Among the scented cushions, my coiled queen
Opens her panther eyes of golden green.

One glimmering breast shines pale
Athwart the gloom that curtains her about ;
Slowly she lifts her arms to me ; her eyes
Meet mine without communion or surmise.

Queen of my dreams, to whom by night I pray ;
Dim idol, moulded of the wild white rose ;

THE LOOM OF YEARS

What evil god wrapt in the fires of Hell
Dreamed, once, of Heaven and wrought too bitterly
well

That light too bright for day ;
That love whiter than any star that glows
Around God's throne, being shapen of the fire
Of utter suffering and hopeless desire.

Here, once, beside thy feet, I watched all day
Night floating in thine eyes, then with my hands
Covered my face from that dumb cry of pain :
And when at last I dared to look again

My heart was far away,
Wrapt in the scented gloom of Eastern lands,
Under the flower-white stars of tropic skies
Where soft black floating flowers relumed thine eyes.

Ah, sweet, I breathe the perfume of thine hair !
Bury in thy deep hair my fevered face,

THE MYSTERIOUS CHAMBER

Till as to men athirst in desert dreams
The savour and colour and sound of cool, dark
streams

Float round me everywhere ;
And memories float from some forgotten place,
Fulfilling hopeless eyes with hopeless tears
And fleeting light of unforgotten years.

Dim clouds of music in the dim rich hours
Float to me through the twilight of thine hair,
And sails like blossoms float o'er purple seas,
And under dark green skies the soft warm breeze
Washes dark fruit, dark flowers,

Dark tropic maidens in some island lair
Couched on hot sand and scented by the sun,
Who dream and sing until their days are done.

Lost in the magic ocean of thine hair
I find the haven of the heart of song :

THE LOOM OF YEARS

There tired ships rest against the pale red sky,
But suddenly there comes a thin sad cry

And all the shining air

Fades—where the tall dark singing seamen throng
From many generations, many climes—
Ah, fades as it has faded many times.

I hear the sweet cool whisper of the waves !

Drowned in the languid billows of thine hair,
I dream as one that sinks through passionate hours
In a strange ship's wild freightage of dark flowers
Culled for pale poets' graves ;

And opiate odours load the empurpled air
That flows and droops, a dark resplendent pall,
Under the floating wreaths funereal.

Under the heavy midnight of thine hair

An altar flames with spices of the south

THE MYSTERIOUS CHAMBER

Burning my flesh and spirit in the flame ;
Till, looking toward the land from whence I came,

I find thy comfort there ;

And all the darkness to my thirsty mouth
Is fire ; but always and in every place
Blossoms the secret wonder of thy face.

What evil god thus glorifies his reign

With mystery, silence, colour, perfume, peace?

Here, every moment that assails the soul
Is fraught with honey from the flowers of dole

Or pearls from seas of pain ;

Ah, here the moments fold their wings and
cease ;

Here day and night and day lie down and die
Under the calm wings of eternity.

Hark, as a hammer on a coffin, falls

A knock upon the door ; the colours wane ;

THE LOOM OF YEARS

The mystic chamber vanishes, 'and there,
With dreadful pencil marked, the calendar

Droops on the dreary walls ;

The winter whistles through a shivered pane ;
And on the bare rough boards beside my feet
My work, my dreams, lie torn and incomplete.

The scent of opium floats about my breath ;

But Time resumes his dark and hideous reign ;
And, with him, hideous memories troop, I know ;
Hark, how the battered clock ticks to and fro—

Life, Death—Life, Death—Life, Death—

Oh fool to cry ! Oh slave to bow to pain !
Coward to live thus tortured with desire
By demon nerves in hells of sensual fire.

THE LOTUS OF WISDOM

WHAT shaken blossoms from the Tree of Life,
In showers of glimmering white and deep dim blue
Through strange soft starry twilights here bestrew
The breathless borders of the world of strife?

What sound of sighs upon the scented gloom
Of Eden where no passionate sorrow comes ;
What light of cloud-pale breasts and breast-blossoms
And weary faces in the lotus bloom ?

What sad red parted lips under the Tree
Of Knowledge hunger towards the bitter fruit,
While all the distance trembles with the bruit
Of Time's wings beating towards Eternity ?

What wave of moaning through the frondage rolls

THE LOOM OF YEARS

When all the fragrant dusk is very still;
Why do the branches toss and weep at will
As if their sap were fed with human souls?

Come, let us go! Take up thy cross and bind
The crown of thorns upon thy brows again
And we will seek the world of endless pain,
The tortured stars, the wild tormented wind,
The passionate heart-break of the world of strife
Where wrapt in Hell the soul looks up to Heaven;
Here Knowledge as a bride to Death is given,
The lotus blossoms on the Tree of Life.

CHRIST CRUCIFIED

CLEAR on the ghostly sky the sharp black cross,
Bearing the lean white shuddering limbs, arose ;
And the dark night grew darker than the depth
Of ocean with unutterable fear.

Then from a land beyond the stars it seemed
There crept a thin sad voice that cut the heart
To hear it, for so cruelly cried the Christ
That, of the women waiting there, two fell
Fainting ; but the third woman silently
With white clenched hands clung upright to the
cross ;
And from her mouth a thin bright thread of blood

THE LOOM OF YEARS

Ran trickling down ; then darker grew the night,
And dark beyond all hope of any dawn
Death sank upon the Christ who cried, "My God,
My Father, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"
When over Calvary the darkness waned,
Clear on the ghostly sky the sharp black cross
Bearing the naked lean white limbs arose ;
And, of the women waiting there, two slept ;
But one clung closely to the bitter tree.
Her mouth was bloody from her broken heart,
And Death e'en now was laying his cold hand
Upon her brow ; the twain who slept were good
And holy women ; this was Magdalen.

IN THE HEART OF THE WOODS

HEART of me, Heart of me, Heart of me, beating,
beating afar,

In the glamour and gloom of the night, in the
light of the rosy star,

In the cold sweet voice of the bird, in the sigh
of the flower-soft sea,

Sure the Heart of the woods is the Heart of
Eternity,

Ay! and the passionate heart it is of you and me.

Love of me, Love of me, linking the world and
the golden moon,

And the flowery moths that flutter through the
scented heat of noon,

And the soul of man with beauty, youth with the
dreaming night

THE LOOM OF YEARS

Of stars and flowers and waters and breasts of
glimmering white,
And streaming hair of fragrant dusk and flying
limbs of lovely light.

Life of me, Life of me, shining in sun and cloud
and wind,
In the dark eyes of the fawn and the eyes of the
hound behind,
In the leaves that lie in the seed unsown, and the
dream of the babe unborn,
I feel you pulsing like flame of blood through
flower and root and thorn,
I feel you burning the boughs of night to kindle
the fires of morn.

Soul of me, Soul of me, yearning wherever a
laverock sings

IN THE HEART OF THE WOODS

Or the leafy gloom is winnowed by the whirr of
linnets' wings,

Or the spray of the foam-bow rustles in the white
dawn of the moon,

And mournful billows moan aloud, *Come soon, soon,*
soon,

Come soon, oh Death, with the heart of love and the
secret of the rune.

Heart of me, Heart of me, Heart of me, beating,
beating afar,

In the green gloom of the night, in the light of
the rosy star,

In the cold sweet voice of the bird, in the sigh of
the flower-soft sea,

Sure the Heart of the woods is the Heart of the
world and the Heart of Eternity,

Ay, and the passionate Heart it is of you and me.

SONG OF HANRAHAN THE RED

Oh, Death will never find us in the heart of the
wood,

The song is in my blood, night and day;
We will pluck a scented petal from the Rose upon
the Rood

Where Love lies bleeding on the way;
We will listen to the linnet and watch the waters
leap,

When the clouds go dreaming by,
And under the wild roses and the stars we will
sleep

And wander on together, you and I.

SONG OF HANRAHAN THE RED

We shall understand the mystery that none has
understood,

We shall know why the leafy gloom is green ;
Oh, Death will never find us in the heart of the
wood

When we see what the stars have seen ;
We have heard the hidden song of the soft dew
falling

At the end of the last dark sky,
Where all the sorrows of the world are calling,
We must wander on together, you and I.

They are calling, calling, Away, come away,
And we know not whence they call ;
For the song is in our hearts, we hear it night
and day,
As the deep tides rise and fall :

THE LOOM OF YEARS

Oh, Death will never find us in the heart of the wood,
While the hours and the years roll by;
We have heard it, we have heard it, but we have
not understood,
We must wander on together, you and I.

The wind may beat upon us, the rain may blind
our eyes,

The leaves may fall beneath the winter's wing;
But we shall hear the music of the dream that
never dies;

And we shall know the secret of the spring;
We shall know how all the blossoms of evil and
of good

Are mingled in the meadows of the sky;
And then—if Death can find us in the heart of
the wood,

We shall wander on together, you and I.

PASTICHE

Low, behind dark apple-boughs,
And the farmer's gabled house,
Sinks the slowly reddening sun;
Day is nearly done.

Now the harvest-burdened wains
Drone along the scented lanes
Homeward; and the deep skies break,
And the stars awake.

Now the anchor plunges bright;
And the ship that longed for night,
In the haven, far below,
Furls her wings of snow.

THE LOOM OF YEARS

It is finished: Love is dead,
And the birds with nestling head
Now beneath a ruffled wing
All forget to sing.

Looming on the coloured West,
Like young giants, fain of rest,
Now the tired labourers go,
Footing dark and slow.

Homeward now from field and fold,
Toilers of the heat and cold,
Men that laboured long to learn,
Patiently return.

In the rosy deeps of space,
Flower-like as an angel's face,
Faint and sweet, from realms afar,
Shines the Vesper star.

PASTICHE

It is finished : toil is o'er,
And the sea forgets the shore,
And the moon and stars confess
Man's great weariness.

It is finished,—song and sin :
And the fruits are gathered in :
And the weary reapers come,
And the last load home.

Now are healed the warrior's wounds ;
In the West a bell resounds :
It is finished ! sleep and rest !
Man has done his best.

A BALLAD OF THE WIND AND THE RAIN

"Heigh ho ! the wind and the rain."

—Fool's song in *Lear*.

WHAT is the end of everything ?

A little sorrow, a little gain ;

And when thy life hath taken wing

A cold hewn stone with a weather stain,

And all the winds shall moan and wave

The weary willows around thy grave,

And this is the song the wind shall sing—

Love for riches and brine for pain,

Wellaway, ah wellaway,

The rain it raineth every day,

Heigh ho ! the wind and the rain.

A BALLAD OF THE WIND AND THE RAIN

Kings are fools, like other men,
That think the rillet shall fill the main ;
Their heads are weak as their hearts ; for when
The grey drought saith that the rose is slain,
And the silver river runneth dry,
Though for your thirst ye strive and cry
The seatide giveth it brine again ;
Love for riches and brine for pain,
Wellaway, ah wellaway,
The rain it raineth every day,
Heigh ho ! the wind and the rain.

Keep all thou hast, thus cometh love ;
But *thou* shalt lose both love and sleep,
And hear the wintry winds above
Through the weary willow sweep,
Fool, fool, fool, on the weak old king,
Who gave for love-sake everything,

THE LOOM OF YEARS

And reapeth the cruel winds, not love ;
Oh lay thy grey hairs low and weep ;
Love for riches and brine for pain,
Wellaway, ah wellaway,
The rain it raineth every day,
Heigh ho ! the wind and the rain.

See how the wind doth honour a king,
Oh merry sport with thy lone grey head,
Hark ! how the desolate moorlands ring
"Lie down, lie down on thy chosen bed :
For neither black nor grey heads know
That one shall reap what he doth sow,
And nought from a seedless field can spring !"
Wellaway that the word is said :
Love for riches and brine for pain,
Wellaway, ah wellaway,

A BALLAD OF THE WIND AND THE RAIN

*The rain it raineth every day,
Heigh ho ! the wind and the rain.*

L'Envoi

What is the end of everything ?
A little sorrow, a little gain ;
And when thy life hath taken wing
A cold hewn stone with a weather stain,
And all the moaning winds shall wave
The weary willows around thy grave,
And this is the song the wind shall sing :
*Love for riches and brine for pain,
Wellaway, ah wellaway,
The rain it raineth every day,
Heigh ho ! the wind and the rain.*

AN AESTHETE

I WALK in ancient ways of light
And groves of ancient gloom ;
Before me glimmers, cold and white,
The portal of the tomb.

Unfettered here by fear or hate,
I cannot faint or fail ;
I have unlocked the secret gate,
And gazed behind the Veil.

The fundamental paradox
Is my conclusive cell,
Where, as a hermit in the rocks,
With God and Death I dwell.

AN AESTHETE

Here nothing common, false, unclean,
May breathe beneath the blue;
The flowers are white, the fields are green,
And everything is true.

Yet I have waved the world aside,
And mocked the dreams of youth;
And cried upon the Crucified
With Pilate—What is Truth?

For what had I to do with love
Of aught on earth that trod
When all the stars that wheeled above
Shone with the love of God?

Poet and sensualist and sōp,
I smile on flower and tree,
And dip my fingers in the sōp,—
Ah, God! who dips with me?

THE LOOM OF YEARS

If, in the eyes of men, I seem
A Judas to my soul,
Judge thou who knowest the depth and dream
And wonder of the whole.

I Am—great name of God—I Am—
Oh, be not far apart
When the last awful epigram
Probes my own bleeding heart ;

When the last scornful sneer at all
The world—and I—hold dear
Shudders through finite shades to call
The Life of Life more near,

Wilt Thou not hear me, heal the wound
Where soul in sense must bleed,
When I have given my life and found
Death, which is Life indeed.

ART

(IMITATED FROM DE BANVILLE AND GAUTIER)

I

YES ; take the sculptor's tool,
Toil and the dream that dies

By rule

Shall lead thee through the skies ;

By rule of hour and flower,
By strength of stern restraint

And power

To fail and not to faint.

For beauty still rebels
Against the toil of years,

THE LOOM OF YEARS

And dwells
In agate, marble, verse.

Then, sculptor, cast away
The clay, wherewith the thumb
May play
When all the soul is dumb.

The far immortal face,
In chosen onyx fine,
Enchase
And chisel, line by line.

Or take, thy dream to guard
With curve and colour bright
And hard,
Carrara, chrysolite.

ART

More lovely shines the dream
From out its laboured tomb
Of gleam
And colour, weight and gloom.

Take up the sculptor's tool,
Toil and the dream that dies
By rule
Shall lead thee through the skies.

II

By rule the heart must bleed,
By rule the sob refuse,
You need
A strait cothurnus, Muse.

THE LOOM OF YEARS

The tenser chords alone,
Though thoughts in tumult throng,

Atone

For Time with tidal song.

Poet, let passion sleep,
Till in metallic rhyme

You keep

Eternal tone and time.

The task is hard to learn
While all the songs of spring

Return

Along the blood and sing.

And harder in the night
Of doubt and unsuccess,

To fight,

With none to help or bless,

ART

With none to understand,
With none to see or hark ;
 No hand
To help thee through the dark.

Yet hear the wondrous word,
The hopeless note of pain
 Deferred,
Ye must be born again.

Reject the wreath of rose,
Take up the crown of thorn
 That shows
To-night a child is born.

By rule the heart must bleed,
By rule the sob refuse,
 You need
A strait cothurnus, Muse.

THE LOOM OF YEARS

III

When beauty from the sea,
With breasts of whiter rose
Than we
Have e'er on earth, arose,

Naked and unashamed
She roamed the rose to cull
Unblamed,
For she was beautiful.

The rose and lily bowed,
To cast, of odour sweet,
A cloud
Before her wandering feet.

ART

And from her radiant eyes
There shone on soul and sense

The sky's
Divine indifference.

No sexual canker scarred
The marvel of that rose,

Or marred
Its passionate repose.

But Love, a lovely boy,
With straight sweet breasts that sighed

For joy,
Went softly at her side.

Oh, mortal memory fond !
Slowly she passed away

Beyond
The curling clouds of day.

THE LOOM OF YEARS

Return, we cry, return,

Till in the sadder light

We learn

That she was infinite.

The dream that from the sea,

With breasts of whiter rose

Than we

Have e'er on earth, arose.

IV

Take up the sculptor's tool,

Toil and the dream that dies

By rule

Shall lead thee through the skies.

All passes: Art alone

Endures with front serene

Of stone,

Dreaming of what hath been.

ART

The memories men immure,
Where soul and substance blend,
Endure
Until the world shall end.

Ah, yet the medal found
Where labourers explore
The ground
Reveals an emperor.

Take up the sculptor's tool,
Toil and the dream that dies
By rule
Shall lead thee through the skies.

TRIOLET

Love, awake! Ah, let thine eyes
Open, clouded with thy dreams.
Now the shy, sweet, rosy skies,
Love, awake. Ah, let thine eyes
Dawn before the last star dies.
On thy breast the rose-light gleams:
Love, awake! Ah, let thine eyes
Open, clouded with thy dreams.

ECHO AND NARCISSUS

I

I, the child of the mountain-caverns, faintly, faintly
out of the distance

Murmur, hovering over the pinewoods, over the
purple, far away;

I, the voice of the fairy moon-land, mine the plumes
that offer resistance

Unto all the magical voices out of the night and
the golden day,

I am Echo; out of the valley lone there came a
voice to the mountain,

Long ago, a voice of melody, and melodious I
replied.

THE LOOM OF YEARS

Clad in the spotted skin of a leopard, lying beautiful by the fountain,

He, the son of the shadowy river, unto the purple mountain cried,

Narcissus !

Long the son of the shadowy river wandered by the waters enchanted,

Heard the song of the Holy Sisters musical moan in the gloomy glade,

Heard the glory of Aphrodite floating over the forest haunted,

Wind-like over the leafy branches, whispering over the wavering shade :

Lightlier than a hart of the wild-wood leapt he into the sun at morning ;

Gentlier than a dove returning laid white limbs on the moss at eve ;

ECHO AND NARCISSUS

Bold as Aethiopian lion, faced the boar and the
wolf with scorning
Sun-kist mouth and splendid eyes that made the
nymphs of the grove to grieve.

II

Never mortal face beheld he, where he watched the
willowy fountain,
Mortal foot there never wandered o'er the wild
enchanted wood,
Mortal voice had never floated to the far-off purple
mountain,
But the murmur of a whispering name he moaned
in loving mood,
Narcissus !

THE LOOM OF YEARS

Hovering o'er the waving pine-wood in the scented
hush of gloaming,

I, the Voice of fairy moon-land heard the whis-
pered word arise ;

Dark as wreaths of odorous incense in the rosy
sunset roaming

Beat my plumes above the valley, softly winnowing
the skies.

And I answered him, *Narcissus* ; but he bent above
the fountain,

Moaning, moaning to the mirror slowly deepening
in the dark ;

Morning tipt with gold the tree-tops waving o'er the
purple mountain,

But the lonely heart lay moaning while above
him sang the lark,

Narcissus !

ECHO AND NARCISSUS

III

Buried deep by the Holy Sisters, pale in the moon-
light softly flowing ;

Never more on the mossy marge the son of the
shadowy river lay :

Out of the golden gates of morning, over the
odorous pinewood blowing,

Came a wind to the peaceful valley, chasing the
ghostly mists away.

I—beholding the summer twilight deepen over the
shadowy fountain,

Greyly over the Flower that sighs when winds
are whispering over the tomb

Unto the dark of the wilder wood-ways, I—from
the purple-waving mountain

Hear a magical voice for ever, out of the glory,
out of the gloom,

Narcissus !

THE MYSTIC

THE golden moondawn and the crimson rose
Clouded the rich green garden close

With light and perfume : Love had passed that
way

Once, and the thorns had frayed his garment's hem,
And he had gathered flowers and scattered them

On dusty pathsides, cold and grey.

So where the twilight drooped more flowery sweet
Surely I traced his wandering feet ;

Till, by the faint gold dappling the green gloom,
I knew the flying hair, the fluttering hem,
And I sped swiftly onward, following them
To portals darker than the tomb.

THE MYSTIC

And there Love vanished and I entered : Night
And Doubt mocked at the dwindling light,
Strange claw-like hands flung me their shadowy
hate ;

I clomb the dreadful stairways of desire
Between a thousand eyes and wings of fire
And knocked upon the second Gate.

The second Gate ! When, like a warrior helmed,
In seas of battle overwhelmed

My soul lay stabbed by all the swords of sense ;
Blinded and stunned by stars and flowers and
trees,

Did I not struggle to my bended knees
And wrestle with Omnipotence ?

Did earth not flee before me, when the breath
Of worship smote her with strange death,
Withered the gilded garment, broke the sword,

THE LOOM OF YEARS

Shattered the graven images and smote
Beauty and Passion through the breast and throat,
Whose death-cry crowned me God and Lord?

Yea, God and Lord! Had tears not purged my
sight?

I saw the myriad gates of Light
Opening and shutting in each wayside flower:
And like a warder, in the gleam of each,
Death, whispering in some strange eternal speech
To every passing hour.

The second Gate? Was I not born to pass
A million? though the sunlit grass
Awed me of old as if a God had smiled;
Have I not cast aside all sins of sense
Regained the heights of primal innocence,
Wise as a man, strong as a child?

THE MYSTIC

Wise as a man to see all earthly grace

Float like a dream across Time's face,

All earthly knowledge vanish in one tomb ;
Strong as a child to love this ancient strife
With high strong light of faith in love and life,
Under the very crash of doom.

Vain, vain, unutterably vain are all

The sights and sounds that sink and fall,

The words and symbols of our daily breath ;
Shall I not drown the finite in the Whole,
Cast off this body and regain my soul,
Find life beyond this gate of death?

It will not open ! Through the bars I see

The glory and the mystery

Wind upward ever, and my starved hands bleed

THE LOOM OF YEARS

With beating here for entrance. Hark, oh hark !
Love, Love, return and give me the great Dark
Which is the Light of Life indeed.

MICHAEL OAKTREE

WHEN May, the perfect lover, with young June
Lay heart to heart amid their sleeping flowers,
I went along a little woodland road
Under the breathless hedgerows rich and white
With blossom. Here and there a long spray
danced

In sunlight o'er the golden-netted path,
And scattered purple shadows at my feet ;
Till underneath an arch of leaves I passed
Out of the wood, and saw the silver moon
Floating in daylight o'er the pale green sea.
It was the quiet hour before the sun

THE LOOM OF YEARS

Gathers the clouds to prayer, and silently
Utters his benediction on the waves
That whisper round the death-bed of the day.
The labourers were returning from the farms,
And children danced to meet them ; from the
doors
Of cottages there came the pleasant clink
Of cup and saucer ; from the distant trees
There soared and sank the caw of gathering rooks :
The leaves were listening to the old, old tale
The sea tells to the sunset with one sigh
While the last wistful sea-bird sought for peace,
And the last fishing boat stole o'er the bar,
And fragrant grasses, murmuring a prayer,
Bowed all together to the holy West,
Bowed all together through the golden hush,
The breathing hush, the solemn scented hush,
The holy, holy hush of eventide.

MICHAEL OAKTREE

And, in among the ferns that crowned the hill
With waving green and whispers of the wind,
A boy and girl, before me, linking hands,
Into the golden West wandered away.

On that sweet afternoon of scent and song
Old Michael Oaktree died. It was not much
He wished for ; but indeed I think he longed
To see the light of summer once again
Blossoming o'er the far blue hills. I know
He used to like his rough-hewn wooden bench
Placed in the sun outside the cottage door,
Where in the listening stillness he could hear,
Across the waving gilly-flowers that crowned
His crumbling garden wall, the long low sigh
Of supreme peace that whispers to the hills
The sacred consolation of the sea.
He did not hope for much : he longed to live

THE LOOM OF YEARS

Until the winter came again, he said ;
But on the last sweet eve of May he died.

I wandered sadly through the dreaming lanes
Down to the cottage on that afternoon ;
For I had known old Michael Oaktree now
So many years, so many happy years,
And he had dandled me upon his arm
When I was little ; he had carried me
High on his back to see the harvest home ;
And given me many a ride upon his wagon
Among the dusty scents of sun and hay.
He showed me how to snare the bulky trout
That lurked under the bank of yonder brook :
Indeed, he taught me many a country craft,
For I was apt to learn, and, as I learnt,
I loved the teacher of that homely lore.
Deep in my boyish heart he shared the glad

MICHAEL OAKTREE

Influence of the suns and winds and waves.
He gave my childhood what it hungered for—
The rude earth-wisdom of the primal man.

He had retained his childhood : Death for him
Had no more terror than his bed. He walked
With wind and sunlight like a brother, glad
Of their companionship and mutual aid.
We, toilers after truth, are weaned too soon
From Earth's dark arms and naked barbarous breast
Too soon, too soon we leave the golden feast,
Fetter the dancing limbs and pluck the crown
Of roses from the dreaming brow ; we pass
Our time in most laborious idleness.
For we have lost the meaning of the world ;
We have gone out into the night too soon ;
We have mistaken all the means of grace
And overrated our small power to learn.

THE LOOM OF YEARS

And the years move so swiftly over us.
We have so little time to live in worlds
Unrealized and unknown realms of joy,
So little time to find the untravelled road
That leads through hopes and visions unfulfilled
Into the triumph of our ultimate Dream.
We are so old before we learn how vain
Our effort was, how fruitlessly we cast
Our bread upon the waters, and how weak
Our hearts were, but our chance desires how strong.
Then, in the dark, our sense of light decays :
There is no help ; we cannot cry to God,
As long ago we cried, with struggling hands
Of penitence and weary suppliant knees.
Lost in the gloom, our faith, perhaps our love,
Lies dead with years that never can return.
But Michael Oaktree was a man whose love
Had never waned through all his eighty years.

MICHAEL OAKTREE

His faith was hardly faith : he seemed a part
Of all that he believed in ; he had lived
In constant conversation with the sun,
The wind, the silence and the heart of peace ;
In absolute communion with the Power
That rules all action and all tides of thought,
And all the secret courses of the stars ;
The Power that still establishes on earth
Desire and worship, through the radiant laws
Of Duty, Truth and Beauty ; for through these,
As through three portals of the self-same Gate,
The soul of man attains Infinity,
Communicates awhile with the Divine,
And enters into Godhead. So he gained
On earth a foretaste of Nirvana, not
The void of eastern dream, but the desire
And goal of all of us, whether through lives
Innumerable, by slow degrees, we near

THE LOOM OF YEARS

The death divine, or from this breaking body
Of earthly death we flash at once to God.
Through limitation of desire this man
Attained a height above the hope of kings.

Yet, as I softly shut the little gate
And walked across the garden, all the scents
Of mingling blossom ached like inmost pain
Deep in my heart, I know not why. They were
So sweet and sad, like distant evening bells
Tolling, over the sea, a secret chime
That breaks and breaks and breaks upon the heart
In sorrow rather than in sound ; a chime
Strange as a streak of sunset to the moon,
Strange as a rose upon a star-lit grave,
Strange as a smile upon a dead man's lips ;
A chime of melancholy, mute as death,
But strong as love, uttered in plangent tones

MICHAEL OAKTREE

Of honeysuckle, jasmine, gillyflowers,
Jonquils and aromatic musky leaves,
Bluebells and lilies of the valley, pinks
And daisies, daisies to the rose-wreathed porch.

At last I tapped and entered, and was drawn
Into the bedroom of the dying man,
Who lay, propped up with pillows, quietly
Gazing ; for through his open casement, far
Beyond the whispers of the gillyflowers,
He saw the mellow light of eventide
Hallow the West once more ; and, as he gazed,
I think I never saw so great a peace
On any human face. There was no sound
Except the slumbrous pulsing of a clock,
The whisper of the garden, and, far off,
The sacred consolation of the sea.

THE LOOM OF YEARS

His wife sat at his bed-side : she had passed
Her eightieth year ; her only child was dead.
She had been wedded more than sixty years,
And she sat gazing with the man she loved
Quietly, out into that unknown Deep.
A butterfly floated into the room
And back again ; pausing awhile to bask
And wink its painted fans on the warm sill ;
A bird piped in the roses and there came
Into the childless mother's ears a sound
Of happy laughing children, far away.

Then Michael Oaktree took his wife's thin hand
Between his big rough hands and held it. There
It lay like a tired ewe, between two crags,
Sheltered from all the winds. His eyes grew dark,
And, as he turned to her and died, he spoke
Two words of perfect faith and love—*Come soon !*

MICHAEL OAKTREE

Oh then in all the world there was no sound
Except the slumbrous pulsing of a clock,
The whisper of the leaves and, far away,
The sacred consolation of the sea.
But, as I softly passed out of the porch
And walked across the garden, all the scents
Of mingling blossom ached like inmost joy,
Joy that is almost pain, they were so sweet
And sad and glad, like distant evening bells
Pealing a mystic music ; still and strange
As voices of the holy Seraphim,
Voices of adoration, mute as love,
Stronger than death, and pure with mingling tones
Of honeysuckle, jasmine, gillyflowers,
Jonquils and aromatic musky leaves,
Bluebells and lilies of the valley, pinks
And daisies, daisies, to the garden gate.
Ah then indeed I knew how closely knit

THE LOOM OF YEARS

To stars and flowers we are ; how many means
Of grace there are for those that never lose
Their sense of membership in this divine
Body of God ; for those that all their days
Have walked in sweet communion with the Life
That keeps the common secret of the sun,
The wind, the silence and the heart of man.
There is one God, one Law, one Element,
One Life behind the many-coloured veil
Of music, moonlight, flowers and human speech.
We have obscured God's face with partial truths :
This is the cause of all our sorrow : sin
Itself proceeds from this, and all our wars
Of force and intellect proceed from this.
Yet, by the battle of our partial truths,
The past against the present and the swift
Moment of present joy against the dark
Years of eternity, the weaker truth

MICHAEL OAKTREE

Is worsted by the stronger, till we near
The indifferent splendour of the whole. Our God
Has been too long a partial God ; but then
We shall not find Him more in this than that,
In virtue than in vice, in life than death.
For all of us—not one alone—nor men
Alone, are sons of God. We are all made
After His image, men and birds and beasts,
Mountains and winds and cataracts and suns,
Yea, all that is above our little world,
Existences that live and move in realms
As far beyond our thought as Europe lies
With all its little arts and sciences
Beyond the comprehension of the worm.
We are all partial images, we need
What lies beyond us to complete our souls ;
Therefore our souls are filled with a desire
And love which lead us towards Infinity.

THE LOOM OF YEARS

These things I know : for I have seen the face
Of one who talked with God before he died:

Peacefully through the dreaming lanes I went.
The sun sank, and the birds were hushed. The
stars
Trembled like blossoms in the purple trees.
But, as I paused upon the whispering hill
The mellow light still lingered in the West,
And dark and soft against that rosy depth
A boy and girl stood knee-deep in the ferns.
Dreams of the dead man's youth were in my heart,
Yet I was very glad ; and as the moon
Brightened, I saw their four lips make one mouth.

Under an arch of leaves, into the gloom
I went along the little woodland road

MICHAEL OAKTREE

And through the breathless hedge of blossom
heard,

Out of the deepening night, the long low sigh
Of supreme peace that whispers to the hills
The sacrament and sabbath of the sea.

THE STATUE

SLOWLY he bent above her pearl-pale hand
And kissed it. But the boy had little heart
To woo the glad young bride that others chose
And thrust upon him as his pryncedom's prize.
The daylight withered on her palace towers
And all the windows darkened as he went
Wearily homeward, tortured with his thoughts,
Tired with his task of wooing without love,
Tired with the toil of all that empty speech,
Tired of her lips, her eyes, her hands, her hair,
And almost wishing loveless death would stay
The mockery of the loveless marriage morn.
The world looked ugly to his bitter gaze :

THE STATUE

Unshapely things crowded upon his heart ;
And in his ears the walls of circumstance
Rang with sharp laughter like the rings of hell.
Through bleary grey lids of cloud the blood-shot
sun

Corruptly shining with a lifeless light
Leered like an evil eye across the hills ;
Till the pure night stole westward pitifully ;
And with soft reverent fingers reaching forth
Pressed it shut in the dead day's leaden face.
Then the woods tossed their sombre plumes and
shed

Rich, heavy, wet funereal fragrances :
And the wind, uttering one low tragic cry,
Perished. It was a night when wanderers
Bewildered there might dread some visible Death
Urging his pale horse through the dim blue light
Of haggard groves and poppy-haunted glades.

THE LOOM OF YEARS

But slowly homeward went the sad young prince :
His path fainted into the forest gloom
Like a thin aisle along the wilderness
Of some immense cathedral long ago
Buried at some huge epoch of the world
Far down, under the mountains and the sea.

The pillared waste of misty wealth rolled on
As if to black Oblivion's fatted shore ;
A wealth of endless vistas rich and dark
With secret hues and carvings and a ghost
—His blood suddenly thrilled and his foot paused !—
A white breast orient in the softening gloom,
A cold white arm waving above the shrine,
A sweet voice floating in a dreamy song
Till all the leafy capitals awoke
And whispered in reply ! Was it the wind
Wafting a globe of flowery mist, a sigh
Of wild-rose incense wandering in a dream ?

THE STATUE

Far, far away, as through an eastern window,
Through low grey clouds, painted in curling folds,
The moon arose and peered into the nave ;
The moon arose behind the dark-armed woods,
And made the boughs look older than the world.

Then slowly down the thin sad aisle the prince
Came with his eighteen summers. His dark eyes
Burned with the strange new hunger of his heart :
His red curved lips were like a mournful wound
Staining the pale proud oval of his face.

He knew how beautiful she was—that bride,
That glad young bride of his, whom others chose.
No kiss too cold, no breast too white and chill
Was hers. He might have loved her once. He
found

His love in all things, not in one alone.
He found the radiant idol of his moods

THE LOOM OF YEARS

In waves and flowers and winds, in books and
dreams,

In paintings and in music, in strange eyes
And passing faces ; but full well he knew
The Light that gave the radiance must still fly
From face to face, from form to form. A word,
A breath, a smile too swift, and at his feet
There lay some broken idol, some dead husk,
And he must seek elsewhere that archetype
Reflected from some other shape of earth,
Darkly, as in a glass. Indeed his love
Dwelt deeper in the night than shè who stole
In moonbeams on Endymion. His heart
Was lost beyond the shining of the stars.
His hopes were in his visions : like a boy
He dreamed of fame ; yet all the more his love
Dwelt in the past among the mighty dead.
The purple skies, the soft deep stars of night

THE STATUE

He loved for their old stories, and again
Wandered by lotos isles and heard the song
Of sirens from a shore of yellow sand.
The vanished Grecian glory thrilled his soul
With mystic harmonies that in broad noon
Added a wonder to the white-curved clouds,
A colour and a cry, a living voice,
Almost the visible Presences divine,
To distant sea-horizons, dim blue hills
Earth's fading bounds and faint infinities.

And now, as down the thin sad aisle the prince
Went footing towards the moon, there came once
more

A gleam as of a white breast in the dark,
A waving of a white arm in the dusk,
A sweet voice floating in a dreamy song.
He paused : he listened. Then his heart grew faint

THE LOOM OF YEARS

Within him, as there slowly rose and fell
A sound of many voices drawing nigh
That mingled with his ancient dreams a song
Still scented like the pages of a book
With petals of the bygone years. He fell
Prone on his face and wept; for all his life
Thrilled in him as a wind-swept harp is thrilled
And all the things that he had once believed
Seemed shattered by that wonder, and the world
Became his dreams and he a little child.

Slowly the distant multitude drew nigh
And softly as a sleeping sea they sang.

*Hast thou no word for us who darkly wander,
No lamp to guide our weary feet,
No song to cheer our way?
Where dark pine-forests sigh o'er blue Scamander,
The flowery winds are sweet,*

THE STATUE

*And the deep moan of doves is heard ;
While shadowy Ida floats in cloudless day ;
Hast thou no word ?*

*Hast thou forgotten the almighty morning
That smote upon the cold green wrinkled sea
And edged the ripples with a rosy light ;
And made us count cold death a thing for scorning
Before the love of thee,
Oh mother, wave-begotten ;
Yea, sunny day was worth the last long night ;
Hast thou forgotten ?*

Whispering ever nearer like a wind
The song sank into sweetest undertone ;
While the faint murmur of innumerable feet
Came onward through the moonlit purple glades.
The prince arose to listen : those wild tears

THE LOOM OF YEARS

Yet glistened in his eyes against the moon.
His dread seemed lost in a great conscious dream:
For, one by one, like shadows of his mind,
Sad voices murmured near him in the dark
And gave his grief their own sweet utterance.

I

*Forbid me not: to-night the world is dreary;
To-morrow it may be the sun will shine,
To-morrow it may be the birds will sing;
Oh Earth, my mother, I am very weary,
I would my hands were folded fast in thine,
That thou would'st make me sleep,
Wrapt in thy mantle deep,
Far, far from sound or sight of anything.*

THE STATUE

II

*Forbid me not: the tide of time grows rougher
Than the old laughter of the Lydian lake,
Than the old glory of the Grecian sea:
I am born too late: and now, my mother, suffer
Thy little one for thine old pity's sake
To rest, only to rest,
Embraced upon thy breast,
Far, far from sight or sound of all but thee.*

III

*Forbid me not: no more the dark sweet forest
At moondawn murmurs with a holy song:
And immemorial love, ah! whither flown?
No more at noon the light that thou adorest,
Oh mother, floats where nymph and naiad throng;
Anadyomene
Is buried in the sea,
The gods are gone, Olympus is alone.*

THE LOOM OF YEARS

IV

*Forbid me not: perchance a brighter morrow
Than e'er the world hath seen, it yet may see ;
But I, what should I do the while but sleep ?
Sleep through the years of suffering and sorrow,
Sleep where the old world sleeps in peace with
thee ;
Ashes to ashes cold,
And dust to dust: behold,
All, all is well, where none can wish to weep !*

Perchance they were the shadows of his mind
Cast into those romantic gloomy glades
That sang to him. But o'er his heart they crept
As winds of April o'er the budding leaves.
Far off a nightingale began to plain,
Fearless of any choirs invisible ;

THE STATUE

And still the rumour of innumerable feet
Stole like a strain of music through the woods
Making the darkness wither into dreams.
All at once the moonlight blossomed and broke
And strowed its petals and quivering sprays
And white rent rose-leaves through the throbbing
night.

Pansy and violet woke in every glade,
In every glade the violet and the pansy
The wild rose and the white woodbine awoke.
The night murmured her passion, the dark night
Murmured her passion to the listening earth.
The leaves whispered together; every flower
With naked beauty wounded every wind.
Under the white strange moon that stole to gaze,
As once on Latmos, every poppied dell
Rustled; the green ferns quivered in the brake;
The green ferns rustled and bowed down to kiss

THE LOOM OF YEARS

Their image in the shadowy forest pools.
Then one last wind of fragrance, heralding
That mystic multitudinous approach,
Wandered along the wilderness of bloom
And sank, and all was very still. Far, far,
It seemed, beyond the bounds of earth, the sea
Drew in deep breaths, as if asleep.

All slept.

Then like a cry in heaven the sudden hymn
Rose in the stillness; and across the light
That brooded on the thin sweet blossoming aisle,
Dim troops of naked maidens carrying flowers
Glided out of the purple woods and sank
Like music into the purple woods again.

But, when the last had vanished, the white moon
Withered, and wintry darkness held the trees;

THE STATUE

And the prince reeled, dazed ; till one strange
sweet voice

Out of the dying murmur seemed to thrill

The very fountains of his inmost life.

The glory and the beauty and the song

Had borne the dreaming moon and all the flowers

And all the summer with them through the
glades ;

But, like another moon upon his night

That voice arose and comforted the world.

With one great sob he plunged into the wood

And followed, blindly, on the fainting hymn.

Blindly he stumbled onward, till the sound

Was heard no more ; but, where the gloom grew
sweet

And sweeter, where the mingled scent of flowers

And floating hair wandered upon the dark,

THE LOOM OF YEARS

Where glimpses pale and rosy moonlit gleams,
Like ghosts of butterflies fluttering softly
Through darkness towards the sun, coloured the
night,
He followed, thorn-pierced, bleeding, followed
still.

Then, from his feet a vista flowed away
Duskily purple as a seaward stream
With obscure lilies floating on its breast
Between wide banks of dark wild roses, grave
With secret meanings, deep and still and strange
As death ; but, at the end, a little glade
Glimmered with hinted marble that implored
Its old forgotten ritual ; for a dream
Lingered, within its walls, of laughter flown,
And bright limbs flushed with flowers and stained
with wine.

THE STATUE

But suddenly as he neared the porch the prince
Paused ; for the deep voluptuous violet gloom
That curtained all the temple seemed to thrill ;
And from the midst stood out the polished breasts
Of Her, the white Thalassian, wonderful,
A Flower of foam, our Lady of the sea.

Then, with wide eyes of dream, the boy came
stealing

Softly : his red lips parted as he gazed :
His head bowed down : he sank upon his knees :
Down on his knees he sank before her feet :
Before her feet he sank, with one low moan,
One passionate moan of worship and of love.
In a strange agony of adoration
He whispered where he lay—Oh, beautiful,
Beautiful One, take pity. Ah, no, no ;
Be as thou art, eternal, without grief,

THE LOOM OF YEARS

Beautiful everlastingly. He rose ;
And timidly he lifted up his face
To hers and saw that sweet and cold regard,
The pitiless divine indifference
Of Aphrodite gazing through the years
To some eternal sea that calls her still.
Oh, timidly he lifted up his lips
And touched her, softly as a flower might kiss,
Once, on the cold strange lips.

There came a cry
Shattering the nerves with agonies of sweetness :
The marble moved : the cold white marble moved ;
And every movement was an agony
Of bliss : the marble softened into life :
The marble softened as a clouding moon
That takes the first faint rose-flush of the day.
The lovely face bent down upon the boy :

THE STATUE

The soft sweet radiant arms enfolded him :
She kissed him, once, upon his curved red lips ;
Then, like a broken flower, down at her feet
He fell. The temple shone with sudden fire ;
And, through the leaves, the wild miraculous
dawn

Tumbled its ruinous loads of breathless bloom
On all the glades ; and morning held the world.

But, ere the morn had melted into noon,
There came a grey-haired man before the King
And told that, as he went to gather wood,
Soon after dawn, he heard a bitter cry
Near that old ruined temple which, some said,
Was haunted still by wandering pagan souls
Too foul for heaven, yet ignorant of hell ;
But he believed it not, and therefore crept
Quietly near to watch and saw the prince

THE LOOM OF YEARS

Dead, on the ground; and, as he thought, he

saw

Some white witch bending o'er the listless corse
Moaning, as he believed, most evil words;
Doubtless it was a creature of the night,
For it wept tears of blood; perhaps, he thought,
It was a vampire; but he knew no more;
For then a grey owl shrieked into his face,
And, fearing death, he fled; and saw the sun
Far off, through bleary grey lids of shaggy cloud,
Leer like an evil eye across the hills.

But when he led a white-faced troop of men
Far through the tangled copses to that glade,
They found the young prince, like a broken flower
Lying, one sun-browned arm behind his head;
And on his dead cold lips a strange sweet smile.

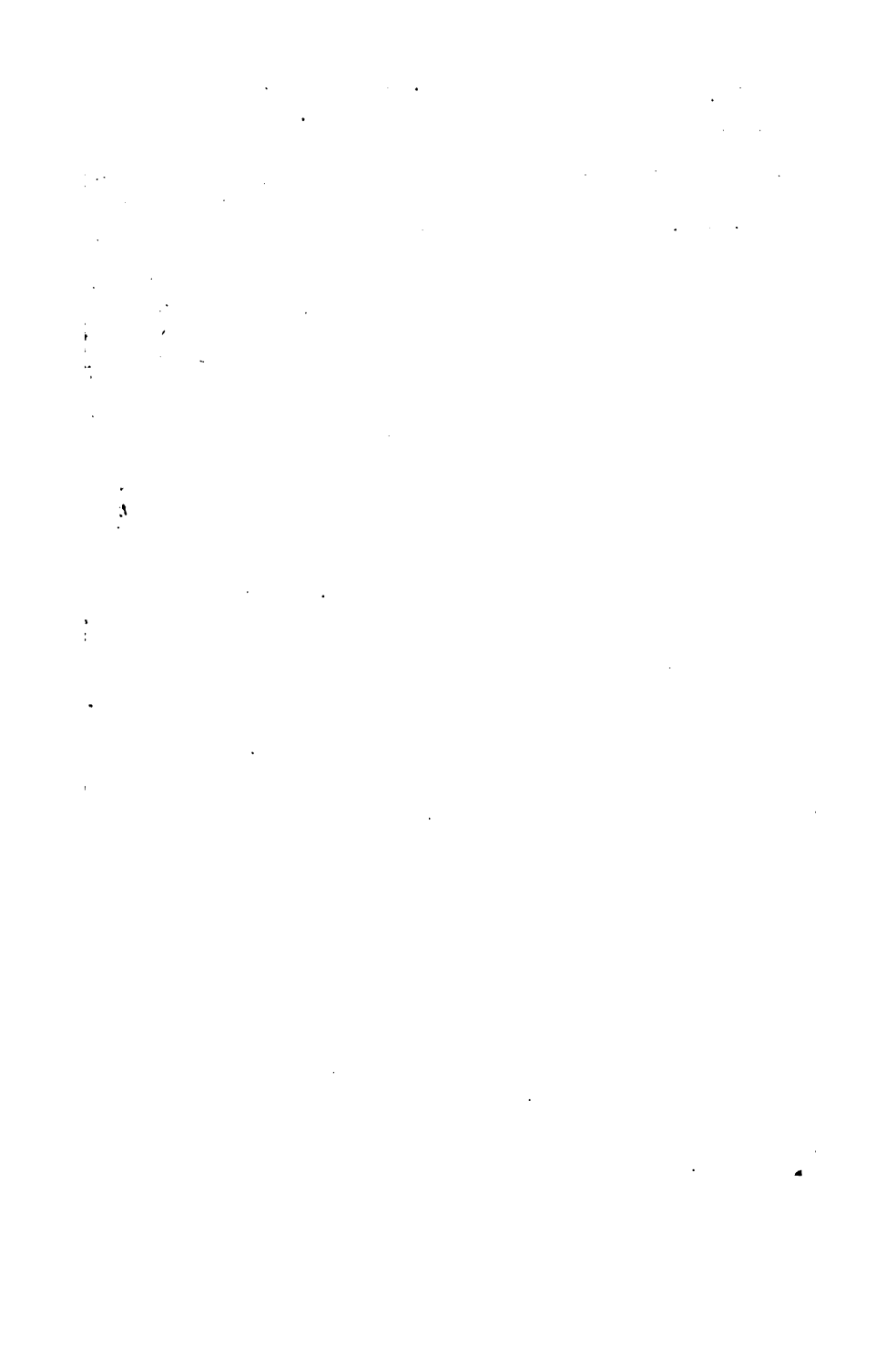
Over him stood the statue, cold and calm;

THE STATUE

But he who urged the loveless wooing, crept
Back, for he had no heart to face again
The pitiless divine indifference
Of Aphrodite gazing through the years
To that eternal sea which calls her still.

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